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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HEW-04 OES-07 SS-15 SSO-00 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 ICAE-00 L-03 NSCE-00 H-01
DODE-00 HA-05 /058 W
----------102474 241643Z /43
O 241607Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2136
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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DEPT PASS HEW FOR SECRETARY CALIFANO'S OFFICE

DEPT PASS HEW FOR FISCHER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TBIO, UR ,US
SUBJECT: US-USSR HEALTH COOPERATION: SOVIET PROTEST OVER ALLEGED POLITICAL STATEMENT OF US SCIENTISTS ABOUT ORLOV CONVICTION

REF: MOSCOW 11498

1. ON MORNING MAY 24 DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH SAFONOV CALLED IN SCICOUNS TO DELIVER "STRONG PROTEST" AGAINST ACTIVITIES OF US DELEGATION CURRENTLY IN MOSCOW TO PARTICIPATE IN SYMPOSIUM ON "GENETICS, REPLICATIONS AND BIOLOGY OF INFLUENZA VIRUSES," UNDER THE INFLUENZA WORKING GROUP OF THE US-USSR HEALTH AGREEMENT. READING FROM A PREPARED TEXT, SAFONOV CLAIMED THAT US SCIENTISTS HAD MADE A "POLITICAL STATEMENT" ABOUT THE ORLOV TRIAL, WHICH SAFONOV STATED REPRESENTED AN UNACCEPTABLE INTRUSION OF POLITICS INTO COOPERATIVE ACTIVITY CARRIED OUT UNDER AN OFFICIAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT.
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SAFONOV ADDED THAT SUCH ACTIVITY WAS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF FURTHER US-SOVIET COOPERATION. SAFONOV ALSO COMPLAINED THAT THIS ALLEGED ACTIVITY OF THE US SCIENTISTS HAD LED TO THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE SYMPOSIUM BY ONE DAY. SAFONOV ADDED THAT IF THE US SCIENTISTS MAKE ANY FURTHER "POLITICAL STATEMENTS" THE SOVIETS WILL TERMINATE THE VISIT. SCICOUNS REPLIED THAT

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USG FAVORS COOPERATION; HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT THE US PARTICIPANTS ARE PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND HE EMPHASIZED THAT THEIR RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT ON ISSUES OF CONCERN IS A MATTER OF "INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE," WHICH THIS EMBASSY CANNOT ATTEMPT TO RESTRICT.

2. LATER ON MAY 24 SCICOUNS INFORMED US DELEGATION MEMBER, DR. JEROME SCHULMAN, ABOUT THE SOVIET DEMARCHE. SCHULMAN COMMENTED THAT SOVIET ACCOUNT WAS DISTORTED IN SEVERAL RESPECTS. SCHULMAN NOTED THAT US DELEGATION HAD NOT MADE ANY "STATEMENT" BUT HAD RATHER DISCUSSED INFORMALLY WITH THEIR SOVIET HOST ON THE EVENING OF THEIR ARRIVAL THE CONCERNS OF THE US SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND OF SEVERAL DELEGATION MEMBERS OVER THE ORLOV CONVICTION ACCORDING TO SCHULMAN, THEIR SOVIET HOST DID NOT MAKE ANY OBJECTIONS TO THEIR PRESENTATION. HE ASKED THE US DELE-GATION HOW MUCH TIME THEY WOULD NEED TO MAKE THEIR DECISION ABOUT WHETHER TO REMAIN FOR THE SYMPOSIU IN RESPONSE, DELEGATION ASKED THAT THE OPENING OF THE SYMPOSIUM BE POSTPONED FROM 10 AM UNTIL NOON ON THE FOLLOWING DAY, MAY 24. THE SOVIET HOST (INSTITUTE DIRECTOR ZHDANOV) APPEARED WHOLLY SATISFIED WITH THIS SUGGESTION. AT NOON THE US DELEGATION APPEARED AT THE SITE OF THE SYMPOSIUM AND INFORMED THEIR SOVIET HOST THAT THEY HAD DECIDED TO CONTINUE WITH THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PROGRAM. SOVIET HOST STATED THAT OTHER PARTICIPATING SOVIETS HAD BEEN UNABLE TO WAIT UNTIL NOON AND REQUESTED A FURTHER POSTPONEMENT OF THE SEMINAR UNTIL THE NEXT DAY.

3. SCHULMAN TOLD SCICOUNS THAT HE WOULD INFORM REST OF DELEGATION ABOUT SOVIET DEMARCHE AND ABOUT SOVIET CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUING DELEGATION'S PROGRAM. SCHULMAN NOTED THAT SOME DELEGATION MEMBERS MIGHT BE INCLINED TO RETURN TO US IMMEDIATELY. SCICOUNS STRESSED THAT WHETHER TO REMAIN IN USSR IS A MATTER FOR THE INDIVIDUAL DELEGATION MEMBERS TO DECIDE THEMSELVES. SCICOUNS RECOMMENDED, HOWEVER, THAT IN ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS THE US DELEGATION MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS: (1) THE DELEGATION IS SURPRISED AND DISMAYED THAT A PRIVATE CONVERSATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL SCIENTISTS HAS BEEN INACCURATELY CONSTRUED AS A "POLITICAL STATEMENT AND MADE THE SUBJECT OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL DEMARCHE, (2) AT NO TIME DID THE US DELEGATION MAKE ANY COMMENTS ABOUT THE ORLOV TRIAL DURING THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SYMPOSIUM AND AT MOST THE US DELEGATION CAN BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR A TWO HOUR DELAY IN THE OPENING OF THE SYMPOSIUM, AND (3) THE SOVIET CONDITION FOR PERMITTING

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CONTINUATION OF THE DELEGATION'S PROGRAM IS UNACCEPTABL
AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE. THE US, FOR ITS PART, WOULD
NOT ATTEMPT TO PREVENT SOVIET SCIENTISTS IN THE US FROM
PRIVATELY CRITICIZING ASPECTS OF US POLICY WITH WHICH THE
MIGHT DISAGREE. IT WOULD NATURALLY BE IMPROPER FOR AN
EXCHANGE SCIENTIST TO USE THE FORUM OF A JOINT SCIENTIFIC

SYMPOSIUM, RATHER THAN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, TO AIR
POLITICAL DIFFERENCES - WHICH CLEARLY DID NOT OCCUR IN
THIS CASE. DR. SCHULMAN AGREED THAT ABOVE REPRESENTED

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PROPER LINE FOR DELEGATION TO TAKE.

4. SCHULMAN STATED THAT HE WILL INFORM EMBASSY
EVENING OF MAY 24 ABOUT DELEGATION'S DECISION WHETHER
TO REMAIN IN THE USSR. WE WILL REPEAT DELEGATION'S
DECISION BY IMMEDIATE CABLE. SCHULMAN
ALSO REQUESTED THAT DR.WALTER DOWDLE (CDC, ATLANTA)
BE INFORMED ABOUT THE FOREGOING DEVELOPMENTS.

5. COMMENT. BESIDES GROSS DISTORTION OF FACT IN THE
SOVIET PROTEST, THE THREAT THAT THE USDEL WILL BE
ASKED TO LEAVE UNLESS IT CEASES ALL "POLITICAL
COMMENT" SETS A PRECEDENT-MAKING NEW LOW IN BILATERAL
SCIENCE RELATIONS. THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO ADVISE
USDEL THAT PRIVATE EXPRESSION OF CONCERN TO THEIR

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SOVIET HOSTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS IS STRICTLY A MATTER
FOR INDIVIDUAL DELEGATES' JUDGEMENT PROVIDED IT IS
DONE IN AN APPROPRIATE CONTEXT, AND DOES NOT INTERFERE
IN PLANNED COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES. UNLESS OTHERWISE
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INSTRUCTED, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT DEEM IT WORTHWHILE
TO RESPOND DIRECTLY TO SAFONOV. HOWEVER, WE WILL
UNDERLINE TO SOVIET COUNTERPARTS AT APPROPRIATE OCCASION
THAT THE USG CANNOT AND WILL NOT MUZZLE USDEL MEMBERS.
(BULK OF US DELEGATION MEMBERS, INCLUDING SCHULMAN,
ARE PRIVATE CITIZENS). END COMMENT. MATLOCK

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